

The air strikes on Syria and the use of poison gas in Duma

In my dismay I said, "All men are liars" (Ps. 116:11)

Dear friends,

We were shocked to hear the news about the use of poison gas in Syria and the US air strikes on the capital Damascus and other cities last Saturday.

Many people see or feel that news reports in the West do not properly portray the facts or are even concealing the truth.

For you, as friends who show a lot of sympathy for Syria and who do so much to help the suffering Syrian people persevere and rebuild the country, I would like to outline the facts the way I personally see them as a Syrian citizen. What I would like to tell you in this letter is my personal experience as well as those things that my brothers, friends and siblings in Syria are experiencing and reporting to me.

While I, as a priest, do not want to politicize, I would nevertheless like to share a few thoughts about the incidents that took place in my home country:

1. The air strikes by the US, Great Britain and France:

On April 14, close to 4 o'clock in the morning local time, the people in Damascus and Homs were startled from sleep by violent detonations. They panicked and thought that Syria was being destroyed the way this had happened in the Iraq war. Everyone tried to learn more about the extent of destruction through the usual social media channels. To everyone's surprise, one saw pictures of people storming the streets and happily celebrating the great victory, instead of fleeing to the basements. At the same time, President Assad had photos taken of him walking into his palace. The population was not afraid of the missile strike.



What was happening there?

US President Trump had threatened airstrikes as a revenge for the poison gas attack allegedly committed by Assad against the opposition forces in Duma/East Ghuta (I will address this issue further below). Two days before the attack, Trump told the Russians about the time of the attack and the targets that were going to be bombed. These were, above all, military airports, chemical weapon storages, and research centers that were to investigate toxic gases. The Syrian government had evacuated all combat aircraft and people. In the attack, the Syrian air defense shot down 71 of the total of 110 "intelligent" missiles (no exact numbers!). The Syrian air defense managed to do this by use of old missiles produced in Russia in the 1960s.

It is interesting to note that only 9 of the intelligent missiles hit the intended targets. Many of the missiles were distracted. The targets that were hit included a research center near



Damascus in Barzeh and the Mazzeh military airbase in Damascus, which had been bombarded several times before by Israel, but no chemical plant. The damage was minimal. There were 3 injured persons in Homs, and some buildings were destroyed, but some had already been damaged before. No one in Syria understood the purpose of the attack. The only explanation for this was that Trump and his allies received from Saudi Arabia an amount

in the billion \$ range for performing the attack.

The Syrian army had managed to free East Ghuta from the grip of the rebels. The last remaining brigade was the "Islamic Army", which is supported by Saudi Arabia. This brigade had appealed to the so-called "International World Community" and called for quick help on the grounds that if Duma falls, then the whole "revolution" would be ended. The West could not find a reason to legitimize the attack on the Syrian army, except for the "poison gas story".

2. Use of toxic gas in Duma:

In this respect, the Syrian army is presented as strategically stupid. An army that has, for 7 years, defied an unscrupulous enemy, an enemy supported by many nations of the world, and has fought against world terrorism, is said to have committed such a dilettante error right at the moment of victory. It is hard to understand why poison gas should be used against rebels who have already surrendered. Western news reports contain facts that are logically incomprehensible. There have, for example, only been pictures of young children as victims of the alleged poison gas attack. One doesn't see a single photograph of injured rebels, as if this bomb had been targeted exclusively at children. It may be true that the children who were shown were indeed killed by poison gas. The question is, who killed them and where did this happen? Normally, small children are with their parents. Where are these parents who can tell us what really happened? If these children have no parents, then the question arises: Who are these children? There are no names mentioned, although it is usual for the opposition to announce the names of the "martyrs" on Facebook.

When Duma was freed, most of the rebels and their families moved to northern Syria. The locals stayed and were questioned about their behavior in the alleged poison gas attack by the government. Many said they did not know about it. Others had only heard about it but did not know where the attack had occurred (these interviews were conducted by n-tv). The way in which the alleged poison gas victims were treated, namely with water, also seemed strange. Duma has an extension of less than 20 km². If the government uses poison gas there, it has to expect that the strong wind in the area will affect all neighboring communities. The whole story sounded implausible to the Syrian people. Many of the people in Duma who had been liberated from the rebel siege received medical treatment. None of these had any symptoms of poison gas damage. According to information circulating on Facebook, the Syrian

government is said to have found in the tunnel systems of the Islamic Army chlorine cans with German inscriptions and serial numbers.

What I personally do not understand is that a state with currently about 20 million inhabitants is being put at risk because of 40 children, whose identities and circumstances of death one does not know. I personally think that the task of the Syrian state is to clarify the circumstances and to punish the perpetrator(s). If the STATE is the supreme decision-making body, it will be punished by the citizens themselves and should not be attacked by foreign powers without any mandate. Such a punishment from outside is an offense to the Syrian people.

The consequences of this story were that Assad received even more support from his own people because they did not believe the allegations of the poison gas attack. Therefore, people cheered Assad on the streets after the air raids by the US & Co.



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